VISIT…

DRY SPELL

A Short Adventure for Four 3rd-Level Player Characters

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Dry Spell is a short D&D adventure for four 3rd-level player characters (PCs). It can be placed in any remote section of your campaign world that is a few days' ride from a city. The area should receive little annual rainfall and feature nearby plains or desert.

The adventure is designed to take place during summer, since most ecosystems experience severe droughts more often during that season than any other. Changing the season is feasible as long as a drought remains a logical possibility.

Although the adventure works with any group of characters, it is helpful to include a ranger or some other character capable of tracking so that the PCs can locate the primary site of the adventure quickly. If the party has no tracking ability, you as DM should either introduce an NPC tracker or find some other fast way to get the PCs into the action.

As always, feel free to adapt the material presented here as you see fit to make it work with your campaign.

PREPARATION

You (the DM) need the D&D core rulebooks—the *Player's Handbook,* the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* and the *Monster Manual*—to run this adventure. This scenario utilizes the D&D v.3.5 rules, but it can easily be adapted for use with the 3.0 rules as well.

To get started, print out the adventure, including the maps. Read through the scenario at least once to familiarize yourself with the situation, threats, and major NPCs (particularly their motivations). In addition, you might want to familiarize yourself with the bugbear from the Monster Manual, though all the statistics needed to run the bandit leader are provided with the adventure. Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information that you can read aloud or paraphrase for the players at the proper times.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The bugbear known as Relgore Himtooth is the leader of a band of humanoid thugs that preys on travelers and raids small farmsteads, stealing the valuables within and occasionally murdering the occupants. The locals have long sought a solution to this problem, but they have found none so far. They lack the funds necessary to draw qualified adventurers to the region, and the problem is not severe enough for the lords who rule this area to dedicate a superior force to its defense.

About two months ago, Relgore and his band attacked a coach that was traveling through the countryside, easily overwhelming the driver and passenger—a noble named Nerius Bootlum. At the time of the attack, Nerius was on his way to consult with a sage named Elwin, who resides in a town some distance away, about a curious magic item called the *eversoaking sponge*. Leaving the two humans for dead, Relgore took everything he found in the coach, including the *eversoaking sponge* and a small fortune in gems that Nerius had with him, and fled to a nearby cave that his company uses as a hideout.

The coach driver was indeed dead, but Nerius Bootlum had actually survived the attack. When he regained consciousness, he slowly and painfully made his way to a nearby Temple of Heironeous, where he received magical curing. Angered by the unprovoked attack, Nerius arranged to have a squad of militia dispatched to the area where his carriage had been waylaid. The militia tracked down Relgore's band, and the ensuing battle took a heavy toll on the raiders, reducing the band to about half its former size. The survivors, including Relgore, managed to escape and lie low long enough for their pursuers to claim a successful mission and return to their posts within the city. Nerius, knowing full well that the threat to the region had not truly been eliminated because no proof of Relgore's death had surfaced, placed a price of 2,000 gp on the bugbear leader's head, in hopes that a bounty hunter or adventurer would be motivated to seek him out and slay him.

Since then, Relgore has reassembled the scattered remnants of his band, but it is far too small to use as an instrument of vengeance against the militia and its leader. Recently, however, the opportunity for some malicious mischief presented itself, and Relgore seized his chance to act. The weather has been unusually dry this summer, and the wells in the nearby settlements have dried up, forcing the natives to either rely on water they have stored or bring in water from the nearby lakes. Relgore realized that the *eversoaking sponge* could soak up immense quantities of water, and that he could reuse it after it had reached capacity simply by squeezing a small amount of water from it. So he decided to take his revenge against the humans by draining the lakes that sustained them in times of drought. Over the course of a week, Relgore eliminated the water from three lakes in the area, reducing them to nothing more than dry mud beds. The few local clerics began channeling most of their magic into *create food and water* spells in an effort to keep the populace from dying of thirst.

A few days ago, new of this situation reached Nerius Bootlum, who quickly made the connection between dry lakes and his stolen *eversoaking sponge*. To date, he has posted several public notices requesting assistance with this problem.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Should the PCs agree to help the locals resolve their dire predicament, you as DM must choose a spot for Relgore's lair and arrange a means for the party to find it. Once there, the party must overcome the remaining members of the raiding party, defeat Relgore, obtain the *eversoaking sponge*, and return it to its rightful owner.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

As the DM, you must decide how best to involve the PCs in the adventure. You can use the following hooks to spur your imagination, modifying them as necessary to fit your campaign or the characters.

- The characters learn of the drought and the dried-up lakes while traveling through the area on other business. Questioning the locals reveals that they believe a raiding band of humanoids is somehow responsible for the problem.
- The locals approach the characters and ask them to track down a band of thugs that is somehow worsening the drought situation. If not stopped, the thugs are likely to drain even more water sources.
- Nerius Bootlum has advertised around his own town for adventurers to destroy a bugbear lord and his band of thugs. If the PCs inquire about the job, Nerius gives them the relevant information and promises them a reward of 2,500 gp for the head of Relgore Himtooth and the return of the *eversoaking sponge*. They may keep any other treasure that they manage to recover, including the gems that Nerius lost to the raiders.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Dry Spell is a site-based adventure in which the action occurs in and around the hideout of the bugbear raiders. The PCs may spend time beforehand gathering information in one or more of the frontier towns in the area, if they wish. Everyone knows where the three drained lakes are, but no one knows exactly where the bandits' hideout is. If the PCs investigate the most

recently drained lake, they can find the tracks of Relgore's raiders leading back to their hideout. Alternatively, you may arrange for other means to get the characters to the right spot, if desired.

Unless you decide to place the raiders' hideout within a day's march of a town, the PCs must bring along plenty of food and water for the trip. Characters who don't carry sufficient supplies must forage for food and water (see the Survival skill description) in the wilderness. Those who don't get enough to eat and drink suffer the effects of starvation and thirst, as described on page 304 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

The adventure begins when the characters reach the area near the marauders' hideout.

A. RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Because of the drought, a number of hungry predators are roaming the area near the hideout. During the trip from a drained lake to the hideout, the chance for a random encounter is 12% per hour. When such an encounter occurs, roll 1d6 and consult the following table to determine which creature or creatures the party meets, or simply choose one.

1d6 Roll	Creature(s) Encountered
1	Dire rats (7–12); hp 5 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 64.
2	Giant worker ants (2–4); hp 9 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 284.
3	Black bear (1); hp 19; see *Monster Manual*, page 269.
4	Giant ant soldier (1); hp 11; see *Monster Manual*, page 284.
5	Leopard (1); hp 19; see *Monster Manual*, page 274.
6	Worg (1); hp 30; see *Monster Manual*, page 256.

B. THE MARAUDERS' HIDEOUT

Relgore and his band typically lair in one of several caves, which are scattered throughout the surrounding territory. They normally do not stay at one encampment for more than three nights at a time.

The hideout where the marauders are staying at the time the party approaches is a small network of caves set into a hillside or mountain. The raiders cannot see much of the surrounding territory even from the cave mouth, so the characters can get within 100 feet of the entrance before the outer guard notices them.

These natural caves were carved out of sandstone by some long-ago waterway. The rough walls have a Climb DC of 22 and are treated as hewn stone walls (see Table 3–9 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for other details). The floors are uneven and are treated as hewn stone floors. A DC 10 Balance check is required to run or charge across these floors; failure means that the character can still act but cannot run or charge that round. Ceilings are 12 feet high in the passageways and 15 feet high in the chambers. Because of the current weather conditions, the interior of the complex is dry and dusty.

Because the bandits usually do not stay here for long, this complex bears few signs of habitation. The raiders sleep on piles of skins and furs that they carry with them from place to place, and they normally hide their treasure in their bedding.

B1. CAVE ENTRANCE (EL 3)

When the PCs come close enough to get a good view of the cave mouth, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

> A few trees partially mask a cave entrance carved into the hillside. The interior is unlit, and no details are visible within.

Any PC who has been following the tracks left behind by the group of marauding bandits automatically notices that the footprints disappear into the cave.

Creatures: Golgo the ogre guards the exterior of the cave.

Golgo (Ogre): hp 33; see *Monster Manual*, page 199.

Tactics: Unless the characters back away into the trees or hide as soon as they see the cave, the ogre notices their approach. If Golgo sees the PCs before they see him, he moves behind one of the trees and attempts to hide there. Because of his size and the fact that he has no ranks in the Hide skill, Golgo must make an untrained Hide check with a Hide modifier of –9, thanks to his size, Dexterity score, and armor. Each PC has a –1 penalty on Spot checks for every 10 feet of distance between him and the ogre.

If Golgo successfully hides from the party, he moves out from behind the tree as soon as any intruder comes within 20 feet of his location. If he succeeds in surprising the party, he throws his javelin at a dangerous-looking character during the surprise round and then charges the nearest PC with his club.

Development: If Golgo is reduced to 10 or fewer hit points, he uses the withdraw action to make a full retreat into the cave. He attempts to reach his comrades in area 2 and warn them.

The Marauders' Hideout
B5
B4
B3A
B3
B2
B1
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B2. GUARD POST (EL 4)

When the PCs reach this area, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

> The passage opens into a large chamber with rough walls. A crude, 4-foot-tall wall made of stacked rocks stretches from one side of the room to the other.

Creatures: Behind this rudimentary wall are three gnolls and two orcs, who immediately attack anyone other than a bandit who enters the cavern.

Gnolls (3): hp 33; see *Monster Manual*, page 199.

Orcs (2): hp 5, 7; see *Monster Manual*, page 203.

Tactics: The gnolls take advantage of the soft cover (+4 bonus to Armor Class) provided by the wall and use their shortbows to fire arrows over it at the PCs. Meanwhile, the orcs move around the obstruction and charge the nearest characters. If the party quickly dispatches the orcs, the gnolls abandon their shortbows in favor of their waraxes and engage the intruders in melee combat, meeting them at the 5-foot gaps between the ends of the stone wall and the cave wall. This tactic ensures that only one PC may engage each gnoll at a time.

Development: The gnoll and orc raiders attempt to hold the party at this location until only two are left standing. At that point, the survivors flee to area 3. Under no circumstances do they brave the dangers in area 4 to warn Relgore of the invading party.

Treasure: Each gnoll carries a pouch containing 100 gp.

B3A. OBSCURED PASSAGEWAY

Over the years, various rockslides have filled this chamber with rubble. The bandits have actively rearranged the rocks to partially block the passageways leading to areas 3 and 4, hoping that any intruders who get to this point will think nothing of interest lies beyond and leave. Any character who makes a successful DC 12 Search check notices the passages, but accessing either requires one character to spend a full round moving the loose rock out of the way. During this time, each of the creatures in area 3 may attempt a Listen check (DC 10, or 15 if the PCs are taking extra precautions to be quiet) to detect the presence of intruders.

B3. COMMON AREA (EL 4)

When the PCs enter this area, read or paraphrase the following aloud, adjusting as needed if the humanoids heard the PCs' approach.

> The tunnel opens into a massive natural chamber. In the center of the cavern is a rough-looking table, and piles of furs and skins lie near the walls, along with some cloth-wrapped bundles. Seven ugly humanoids appear to be arguing over various pieces of loot.

Creatures: This chamber houses the lowest-ranking members of Relgore's band—three goblins and four orcs.

Orcs (4): hp 5, 5, 5, 6, 6; see *Monster Manual*, page 203.

Goblins (3): hp 5, 5, 6; see *Monster Manual*, page 133.

Tactics: Unless they heard the party moving rubble from area B3A or were warned in advance of intruders by escapees from area 2, the creatures within this room are unarmed when the party enters. As soon as they become aware of the PCs, the raiders grab their falchions and charge or, if they have a round before the characters close to melee range, they throw their javelins and then move in to engage them in melee.

Development: The orcs and goblins in this room fight to defend it for as long as possible. As soon as it becomes apparent that their resistance is futile, they surrender to the party. Under interrogation, they reveal that area 4 contains one or more hazards. They think Relgore may have placed some kind of a trap there, but since they've never been down there, they don't know what kind of trap it might be, or where it is located. All they know for sure is that the corridor is quite dangerous.

Treasure: In addition to the weapons and armor that the goblins and orcs are using, they have a small, finely wrought gold bracelet (worth 70 gp) and 400 gp that they were trying to split up when the PCs arrived.

B4. PERILOUS CORRIDOR (EL 3)

As soon as the PCs enter this area, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

> The hallway widens out at this point. Unlike the rest of the tunnels in the complex, the floor here is covered in a heavy layer of pebbles and dirt.

The dirt in this area hides several weak spots in the cavern floor, which are indicated by the red squares on the map. Relgore and his guards carefully investigated this room before taking up residence in area 5, so they all know where the dangerous areas are.

Trap: As a last line of defense, Relgore covered the weak spots with debris, so that creatures stepping on the floor would break through it and fall. Some 30 feet below this corridor lies a chamber similar in shape to this widened section of tunnel. Any creature that falls into this lower room takes 3d6 points of falling damage and ends up in an open area directly beneath the weak spot that gave way.

Camouflaged Pit Trap: CR 3; mechanical; location trigger; no reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 30 ft. deep (3d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in a square); Search DC 24; Disable Device 16. Market Price: 900 gp.

B5. RELGORE'S CHAMBERS (EL 5)

If the PCs made any noise in area 4, read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs enter this area. Adjust the text appropriately if they succeeded in approaching in absolute silence.

> This chamber is empty except for three piles of skins, a small pile of what appears to be treasure, and two statues depicting scaly, snake-headed humanoids. They look like they were sculpted from clay and then lacquered green.

The statues, sculpted by yuan-ti in ages past, depict heroic members of this vile race.

Creatures: Relgore lives in this chamber with his two orc bodyguards. Unless the PCs use a *silence* spell or somehow manage to traverse area 4 without making any noise, the three bandits are concealed inside niches in the wall when the PCs enter.

Relgore has been a bandit for many years and has survived several attempts on his life. He has been forced to rebuild his group on more than one occasion after suffering heavy losses. Relgore believes that he can fight the PCs and win, or at least wound them and escape with his life.

Relgore Himtooth: Male bugbear barbarian 3; CR 5; Medium humanoid (goblinoid); HD 3d8+9 plus 3d12+9; hp 50; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +5; Grp +9; Atk +10 melee (1d12+7/[TS]3, *+1 greataxe*) or +7 ranged (1d6+4, javelin); Full Atk +10 melee (1d12+7/[TS]3, *+1 greataxe*) or +7 ranged (1d6+4, javelin); SQ darkvision 60 ft., fast movement, illiteracy, rage 1/day, scent, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 19, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Hide +4, Intimidate +4, Jump +4, Listen +2, Move Silently +8, Spot +2, Swim +2; Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack.

Rage: The following changes are in effect as long as Relgore rages: HD 3d8+15 plus 3d12+15; hp 62; AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17; Grp +11; Atk +12 melee (1d12+10/[TS]3, *+1 greataxe*) or +7 ranged (1d6+6, javelin); Full Atk +12 melee (1d12+10/[TS]3, *+1 greataxe*) or +7 ranged (1d6+6, javelin); SV Fort +9, Will +4; Str 23, Con 20; Climb +7, Jump +6, Swim +4. His fit of rage lasts for 8 rounds, but he may voluntarily end the rage prematurely. After raging, he is fatigued (–2 Strength, –2 Dexterity, can't charge or run) for the duration of that encounter. He can fly into a rage only once per encounter and once per day. Entering a rage takes no time by itself, but Relgore can do it only during his action, not in response to someone else's action.

Illiteracy: Relgore does not know how to read and write.

Scent (Ex): Relgore can detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell.

Trap Sense (Ex): Relgore gains a +1 bonus on Reflex saves made to avoid traps and a +1 dodge bonus to AC against attacks made by traps.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Relgore retains his Dexterity bonus to Armor Class even if he is caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. He still loses his Dexterity bonus to AC if he is immobilized.

Possessions: Scale mail, *+1 greataxe, eversoaking sponge.*

Orcs (2): hp 5, 7; see *Monster Manual,* page 203.

Tactics: The characters have only a few seconds to look over this room before the bandits attack. Their strategy is to bring down whichever PC looks like she can deal the most damage, then focus on the next-toughest opponent. However, Relgore is also interested in gaining magic items, so he attacks characters who appear to be spellcasters whenever possible.

Relgore begins combat by flying into a rage and throwing a javelin at a PC who appears to be a spellcaster. He then charges the PC who seems to be the most physically powerful. Thereafter, if he gets a chance to attack the party's spellcasters, he does so without hesitation, though he is not willing to risk attacks of opportunity to do so. If attacking spellcasters proves too difficult, Relgore focuses on the most heavily armored melee fighter and orders the orcs to concentrate their attacks on that PC as well. Otherwise, the orcs attempt to keep the group's fighters engaged and spread apart so that the bugbear can get through their line of defense and strike at the party's spellcasters.

Development: More than likely, the two orcs will fall in battle before Relgore does. If the battle goes

against him, Relgore voluntarily ends his rage and seeks to flee.

Treasure: A successful DC 15 Search check of the statues reveals that both are hollow and that each holds approximately 50 gallons of water. Despite their excellent craftsmanship, the two statues together are worth only 35 gp.

Relgore's guards have no treasure, but the bandit leader's ill-gotten wealth is concealed in the pile of furs and skins on which he sleeps. Anyone who makes a successful DC 12 Search check in that area finds the following items: a chunk of obsidian (worth 10 gp), a piece of malachite (worth 9 gp), a golden yellow topaz (worth 800 gp), a fiery yellow corundum (worth 600 gp), and 400 gp.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the party successfully kills or captures Relgore and his band of marauders, the unnaturally severe drought ends, but it still takes several weeks for the lakes previously drained of water to refill. Should the party seek the reward offered by Nerius Bootlum, he pays them a total of 2,500 gp, provided that they offer proof that they have killed Relgore Himtooth and return the *eversoaking sponge* to him. The party may instead choose to sell the *eversoaking sponge*, which is worth much more than that, though finding a buyer in this area is difficult, since everyone within a 50-mile radius is dismayed by its recent use. If the PCs do find a buyer in this region, the most they can get for the sponge is 50% of its usual market price.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

The party may be called on to escort caravans carrying water from another lake to the thirsty people in the drought area until their own water sources have been restored. Such a caravan may be set upon by other bandit groups, as well as the hungry and thirsty animals that are struggling to survive in this landscape.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Darrin Drader was born in Pullman, Washington in 1973, and he attended Washington State University there. He has lived in western Washington for the past eight years and is thrilled to be an employee of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Darrin has done design work for *Asgard Online Magazine*, *D20 Weekly Online Magazine*, DRAGON Magazine, Star Wars Gamer Magazine, Bastion Press, and of course, Wizards of the Coast, Inc. His most recent credits include the *Book of Exalted Deeds* and the forthcoming FORGOTTEN REALMS *Serpent Kingdoms* (July 2004).

EVERSOAKING SPONGE

This item was originally detailed on page 132 of the *D&D Arms and Equipment Guide*.

Eversoaking Sponge: This large, normal-looking sponge can absorb an enormous quantity of water. If placed in a body of water, it floats and begins soaking up water at a rate of 1,000 gallons per round, stopping only when it has absorbed 225,000 gallons of water—the contents of a pool 100 feet long, 50 wide, and 6 feet deep. This water disappears completely, and if the sponge is squeezed afterward, it releases only as much water as a normal wet sponge would. The *eversoaking sponge* absorbs only water, not mud or muck. Acid, oil, and other liquids affect it as they would a normal sponge.

Moderate transmutation; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, *disintegrate*; Price 26,400 gp; Weight —.